PANEL OF CHAIRMEN.

PRESIDENT: Under rule 3 (2) of the Legislative Rules, I have nominated Mr. P. K. Narayana Pillai and Mr. S. Chattanatha Karayalar as the panel of Chairmen for the current session.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT.

PRESIDENT: Before announcing the procedure to be followed in this House in discussing the Budget Estimates presented last Tuesday by the Financial Secretary, I propose to give my rulings on certain points which arose during the last meeting as I had promised to give at this Session.

One of the points raised was whether it was in order for the Government to answer an interpellation by laying a Statement on the Table, even though the interpellation itself did not ask for such a statement. I looked into the Rules and Standing Orders governing the conduct of business in the House and I find no provision to enable the Chair to compel the Government member, or for the matter of that any member, to give answers in any particular manner. Questions are admitted by me as President when they satisfy the Rules and Standing Orders. Whether Honourable Members are able to extract satisfactory replies from Government is a totally different matter in regard to which the Chair has no legal responsibility. That all reasonable discretion should be given to the members on the official side as well as on the non-official side in the matter of answering questions will, I believe, be readily conceded. In regard to the practice of laying a Statement on the Table, it will be recognised that, in fairness to the House and in order to save valuable time, it may be necessary to adopt the expedient rather than take up the time of the House by reading lengthy statements and lists. Upon the specific point raised, I should also say that it is a common practice in Legislative Chambers in British India to answer questions, including starred questions, by laying Statements on the Table, even though the interpellation itself did not ask for such a statement. I may add that when, on one occasion, a member complained in the Indian Legislative Assembly that the mere laying of a Statement on the Table was not sufficient answer in respect of starred questions and claimed that the Statement should at least be read in the House, it was held that the procedure of laying the Statement on the Table was usual and had to be accepted as correct. In the circumstances, I have to rule that it is perfectly in order for Government to answer an interpellation by laying a Statement on the Table, even though the interpellation itself did not ask for such a statement. But, I feel confident that such a procedure would be adopted by Government only rarely and when absolutely necessary.

In regard to the procedure to be followed for laying Statements on the Table, I had already ruled that such Statements are laid by handing over the statements at the Secretary's Table. I have looked into the matter again and find that in the Indian Legislative

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[President.]

Assembly, where the orders in regard to the putting of questions and giving of answers are substantially the same as ours, the practice is that the Statements are only handed over at the Secretary's Table. They are neither read in the Assembly nor are copies thereof circulated to the members. The ruling, therefore, that I gave during the last Session will stand.

Another important point that was raised during the last Session was whether it is open to Government to withhold any information on the ground that it was of a confidential nature and could not be divulged in public interests. Here again the House will realise, as already stated, that as President I cannot compel any answer being given to a question put in the House. That apart, it is only right that, in the public interests, Government should be allowed the discretion to withhold information which, they think, is of a confidential nature. I find that, even in the House of Commons, an answer cannot be compelled if refused on the ground of public interests. My ruling, therefore, is that it is quite open to Government to withhold any information on the ground of public interests and that, in such cases, an answer to the question concerned cannot be insisted upon or the Government's position challenged. Further in regard to confidential documents, I find that it has been specifically ruled in the old Legislative Council that documents, which Government claim to be confidential or otherwise privileged, need not be placed on the Table of the House, even though such documents may be cited or quoted from. That ruling is at page 35 of Vol. IX of the Travancore Legislative Council Proceedings. I see no reason to modify that ruling.

Now in regard to Budget procedure. Under Rule 69, the debate on the Budget will begin with a general discussion and be followed by the voting of Demands for Grants. Two days have been allotted for the general discussion and seven days for the voting of Demands for Grants. The Demands will be taken up in the order in which they are printed in the List of Demands, copy of which has been already furnished to Honourable Members. The Demands under I.—Education, II—Public Works Department and VI—Land Revenue, may each be discussed for one whole day; and not more than half a day will be allotted for each of the remaining Demands.

Every member, other than the Financial Secretary, will be allowed, during the general discussion stage, not more than fifteen minutes. But I hope Honourable Members will, while not unduly restraining themselves, allow as many non-official members as possible to participate in the discussion, and render it possible to give the Government members also adequate time for reply. I hope it is recognised that a discussion in which non-official members alone have taken part will lack in completeness, unless official members too have had an opportunity of explaining or clarifying points raised by the former in the course of the debate. When voting on the Demands for Grants, every mover and the official member who has the right of

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reply will be allowed ten minutes each and the other members five minutes each. Standing Order No. 59 requires notice of every motion to be given to the Secretay two clear days before the day on which the Demand comes up for consideration. Late motions will not be accepted. It will facilitate business if Honourable Members giving notice of token motions will also specify the purpose underlying the proposed cut.

In calculating the number of hours to be allotted for the voting of Demands, I propose to lay down the following procedure. A day will be taken as from 11 A. M. to 5 P. M. One hour being available for question time, and another hour (1 to 2 P. M.) as lunch interval, the remaining four hours will be treated as one full day and two hours as a half day. If the whole of the first hour is not taken up for questions and answers, the time left over will be available for the voting of Demands for Grants. Such available time will not go to increase the time allotted for any particular Demand, but will be available to the House and thus enable them to reach more Demands.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION.

PRESIDENT : I have received a motion for the adjournment of the House. The motion reads thus:—"I beg leave to move that the business of the House be adjourned for discussing the action of the Government in introducing from the 1st Chingom 1110 many new toll gates on public roads in the State without paying due consideration to the prevailing economic depression."

I have considered that gentleman's motion very carefully, and it was possible to rule it out of order, under sub-clause 4 of rule 21 of the rules, which says that the motion must not anticipate a matter which has been previously appointed for consideration or with reference to which a notice of motion has been previously given, on the ground that this question first deserves to be discussed in the course of the Demand under the Public Works; but still, in view of the fact that there may not be perhaps a certainty when the motion may come into a definite form in which it is sought to be discussed before the House on the allotted day I am prepared to allow the motion.

Has the House any objection?

RAO SAHIB DR. N. KUNJAN PILLAI (*Chief Secretary to Government*): I object to it.

PRESIDENT : Are there any members in favour?

The motion fell through for want of support.

PRESIDENT : The House will now proceed to the general discussion of the Budget.

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE BUDGET.

MR. S. J. NAIR (*Nedumangad*) : Sir, it is a matter for congratulation that Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar has settled that thorny question of purchase of the Shencotta—Quilon Railway. Now we are not concerned to purchase the line. Purchase the line we must; but

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